

ART. VI.—*Summary description of four new species of Otter.* By
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To the Editor of the Asiatic Journal.

SIR,

One of the most remarkable features of the mammalogy of Nepal is the great number of distinct species of *Otter* characterising it. There are at least seven species, I believe, though not one of them is numerous in individuals, at least not in comparison of the common Otter of commerce, which is produced in the neighbourhood of Dacca and Sylhet. This rarity of species, added to the circumstance of the animals not being regularly hunted for their skins, renders it very difficult to procure live specimens; and without live specimens—which may be slain and their osteological as well as other characters thus accurately examined—the discrimination of specific differences is a work of extreme labour and delay. Many years ago I announced to Mr. Bennett, the late Secretary of the London Zoological Society, the fact that there are several species of *Lutra* in Nepal, and before he died he was nearly convinced of the correctness of the statement, though I could not then, nor can now, give a full exposition of even those with which I am best acquainted.

Waiting, however, for the perfect knowledge when the materials of it are not under command, is, I find, like waiting on the river's side for a dry passage after the waters have flowed past; and I shall therefore offer no apology for briefly characterising those four of the seven Nepalese species of Otter of which I have considerable certainty, leaving the remaining three to some future occasion.

GENUS LUTRA.

1st. *Species*—TARAYENSIS NOBIS.

Size, medial. *Structure*, typical. Skull and head much depressed. Lower incisors ranged nearly in line. Tail equal to two-thirds the length of the animal, and much depressed. Form, robust. Nails compressed, exerted from the finger ends, and acute. Fur short and smooth. *Colour*—above, clear umber; below, and the hands and feet, pure yellowish white; the yellow tint deepest on the limbs; the pale colour on the head and neck extending upwards to the line of the ears—less so on the body; and the distinction of dark and pale hues very decidedly marked. Tail above and below, dark.

2d. *Species*—MONTICOLUS NOBIS.

Size, large. *Structure*, upon the whole, similar to the above. Tail equal to more than two-thirds of the animal, and less depressed. Skull and head less depressed. Intermediate incisors of lower jaw ranged entirely within or behind the line of the rest. *Colour*—above, deeper than the above, or bistre brown; below, sordid hoary, vaguely defined, except on the edge of the lips and chin; limbs nearly as dark as the body. Fur longer and rough, or porrect from the skin in a considerable degree.

3d. *Species*—INDIGITATUS NOBIS.

General form and proportions of *Leptonyx*, to which it is affined. Habit of body more vermiform than in the above. Tail but half the length of the animal. Toes very short, and more than half buried in the palmary mass. Nails short and worn, but not depressed nor truncated, as in *Leptonyx*. *Size*, medial. *Colour*—same as in the last, but deeper still, or dusky bistre; paler and ruddier on the body below, and albescent on the head below; but the colours not well defined, and only really distinct (except in shade) on the inferior surface of the head. Character of the fur as in the last, and indeed in all the mountain species.

4th *Species*—AURO-BRUNNEUS NOBIS.

Size, small. Habit of body still more vermiform. Tail less than two-thirds of the length of the body. Toes and nails fully developed. Fur longish and rough, as before. *Colour*—rich chesnut brown (the fruit) above; and golden red below and on the extremities.

Remarks.—The three last species are confined to the mountains, as is the first species to the plains at their foot. The dimensions in inches, and the weight of the four species are as follow:—

	1	2	3	4
Tip of snout to base of tail . }	26 to 28	30 to 32	22 to 24	20 to 22
Tail	16	20	10½	12 to 13
Weight	16 to 20 lbs.	20 to 24	11 to 13	9 to 11

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

B. H. HODGSON.

Nepal, May, 1839.